

1799

4107

MR. ATHERTON'S ORATION.

W. A. T. O.

W. A. T. O.

AN
ORATION

DELIVERED AT CONCORD, N. H.

AT THE

INSTALLATION

OF THE

Blazing-Star Lodge,

MAY 6, A. L. 5799.

 V
BY CHARLES H. ATHERTON.


SAMUEL PRESTON, PRINTER, AMHERST.
JUNE—1799.

Blazing-Star Lodge, May 6, Anno Lucis, 5799.

VOTED, That the Right Worshipful Brother DANIEL WARNER, Brother DAVID M'CRILLES, and Brother ANDREW BEWERS, be a Committee to wait on Brother ATHERTON, and present him the thanks of this Lodge for his ingenious discourse delivered this day at the Consecration of said Lodge, and desire of him the favor of a copy for the press.

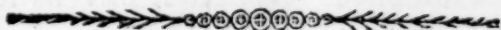
Attest,

ISAAC DE LA MATHER, *Secretary.*





A N O R A T I O N.



IT could not be unexpected, that a ceremony so novel, as the installation of a Lodge of Masons, should have excited general attention. A society claiming a surprising antiquity, universal in its principles and language, and the tenant of every clime; a society, which is flourishing in this country with a patronage and a luxuriance ever accompanying a good scion, when planted in a soil enriched by freedom, and when cherished by an air breathing charity and toleration, must be an object of curiosity to all those, who from want of opportunity, from indifference, or from prejudice, are yet ignorant of the objects of its pursuit, and of the principles to which it owes its duration.

THE public are interested in all institutions in their moral, religious and political tendencies. Thus far are they concerned, and thus far have their enquiries a claim and a right of indulgence.

A society maintaining secrecy on any subject, which can affect the public welfare, from the sole circumstance of its mystery ought to excite suspicion. Should such an association become considerable enough to attract the notice of the public eye, its perseverance in secrecy would justify the outstretching of the arm of government to demolish it, as a nuisance. When it unveils its mysteries, when it "puts its candle on the top of the bushel," mankind will then determine, whether it emits a sickly and poisonous vapour, or whether it beams a salutary light. Agreeably to this decision, it will either be frowned into contempt, or be favored with the smile of indulgence and the blessing of peace.

ALTHOUGH masonry be averse to a vain and ostentatious display of its merits, our book of constitutions, our charges, and other public records, which are open to the inspection of all, clearly demonstrate, that those things which are retained as the secrets of the society, ought to give no kind of alarm, and are very unimportant to mankind. Were it permitted to unveil them, however the snakes of envy might shake and hiss, all that solicitude for their effects, which is founded in a love of peace and good will to man, would vanish at the developement.

AN antient and venerable record copied in the reign of King Henry the VIIIth of England from a manuscript of his predeceffor, King Henry the VIth, very juſtly defines the limits between the ſecrets of the order and thoſe things which may be communicated. When diveſted of its black and Gothic letter, and the barbarous dialect of the age, this record ſays, “ that maſons have in all ages diſcovered ſuch things as would be uſeful, and that they conceal only ſuch things as might be abuſed, if they were to come into the poſſeſſion of evil minded perſons ; or ſuch as might appear frivolous and unmeaning when unaccompanied with the inſtructions which uſually attend them in the Lodge ; or ſuch things as are neceſſary to diſtinguiſh and characterize the Fraternity.”

TO animate the brotherhood to the duties of the order, and to gratify, what he conceives to be a laudable curioſity in others, would be to the ſpeaker a pleaſing taſk, could he flatter himſelf, that his leiſure and talents have enabled him to juſtify that partiality which has placed him here, or to ſatiſfy the expectations of this numerous, this reſpectable aſſembly.

THE grand object of maſonry, is the promotion of an extenſive benevolence and an univerſal virtue. Subſervient to this are its every

principle and secret. Hence arises the necessity of a universal language, which, notwithstanding the confusion of foreign tongues, and the forbidding estrangement of custom, draws from the heart of a stranger the acknowledgment of a brother, with all its attendant endearments. The first mention, in the annals of the craft, made of this universal language, was when the sons of Noah, at the building of the Tower of Babel, made to themselves a *sign*,* previous to their dispersion by that miraculous jargon of speech, which made the mouth of every man speak a language foreign to the ear of his brother.

FROM its prime object, the diffusion of benevolence, and the restoration of brotherhood to man, flows also its principle to admit of “no national, political, or ecclesiastical distinctions.” It is not merely that narrow benevolence confined to our kindred, our circle, or that relieves objects of immediate distress, by the contributions of charity; but it is that sublime benevolence, which rises superior to national peculiarities and differences in politics and religion, breaks down these walls of partition, by which man has been fancied an enemy to man, teaches him to view mankind as the descendants of the same parent, subject to the same propensities, exposed to the same wants, and

* Commonly translated a *name*; but the better translation is a *sign*.

alike hastening "to that bourn from whence no traveller returns." And however diversified by education and climate, to view the tenants of all regions, as entitled to the offices of kindness, and to consider "every good man and true," of whatever government, country, or religion, every man into whose breast science has shed her sacred light, and in whom the latent spark of divinity has been drawn out into the acknowledgment and practice of the religion of nature, as worthy to be called by the endearing appellation of brother, and to be received into the bosom of a Lodge.

WITHOUT the adoption of this generous and noble principle, masonry would be confined to a particular party, sect, or territory. National, political and religious distinctions, instead of opposing no mounds to its influence, would confine and limit its expansion by insuperable barriers. Lodges, instead of being temples of benevolence, would be the nurseries of prejudice, and every root of bitterness. Every Lodge would have its customs, its creed, its bill of rights. Heresies and nonconformity would be the rallying points of the most inveterate antipathy. Our bright chain of union would become a rope of sand. The members of distinct Lodges, instead of cordiality and fellowship, would assume towards the members of other Lodges, the manners of a stranger, and carry the

heart of an enemy. "Our house would be divided against itself and must fall."

TO this important principle too, is to be traced that great secret of the order, which renovates it, when in the decline, and which has given it perpetual life. Empires have risen, flourished, and are, alas! no more; but Masonry having been once established, has triumphed over the malice of its enemies and the ruins of time.

TAKE from the world these bones of contention and what is there left but the strife of love? Private animosity might sometimes darken the scene; but while the quarrels of individuals leave no lasting traces of devastation behind them, public warfare, those disputes which excite communities to engage, inflict wounds on the face of the creation, from which ages cannot recover it, and produce a ruin in the moral world, which generations cannot reclaim. The first are like the showers of Summer, a tree, or a turret may fall; but the air is purified, the fields smile at returning peace, and the sun beams a brighter ray. The latter is a dark, furious, unremitting storm, that in a flood of destruction, sweeps away man's best hopes, himself, the fruits of his research, and the monuments of his labour, that converts a country from a garden to a grave-yard, upon whose numerous ruins, as

upon so many tombstones, we read inscribed the sad memento of its fate.

NEED it now be proclaimed, that masonry teaches a pure morality, and enforces it by the most impressive ceremonies and symbols? Forcibly to impress this audience with an idea of that morality in the world, and that piety towards a Supreme, which we deem essential to the character of a true and accepted mason, they need only be assured, that they are contained in the pages of that sacred volume,* which lies open before us. That from this as the oracle of truth, we learn our private, social, civil and religious duties, "to live soberly and righteously in the world; to do unto others, as we would that they should do unto us; to render unto Cæsar, that which is Cæsar's, and unto God, that which is God's."

PREVIOUS to the bright æra of speculative masonry, which we date in 1715, no persons were admitted into a Lodge, except artists in the grand science of architecture. It was then that good men and true of all professions, observing the mild benefits of masonic fellowship, and that it opened new stores of happiness, by enlarging the social feelings of man, knocked at the Lodge door, and the benevolence that was within could not refuse

* The Bible.

them admittance. We do not now ask whether a candidate ever laid a tile, hewed a stone, or constructed a pillar. The enquiries are, does he act within the compass of temperance? Is he acquainted with the sweet cement of brotherly love? Does he square his actions to his duties? Have his affections been led from the contemplation of the works of nature to the acknowledgment and adoration of the Supreme Architect of the Universe? Does his life exhibit to mankind a fair and proportionate edifice founded on the solid base of integrity, and adorned by the beauty of holiness? This is the builder whom we call a MASON.

BUT hark! Whose voice is that which complains of masonry because it is gay and cheerful? It is hollow and grating to the ear. His eyes are sunken, and his brows are fullen. Gloom and chilling damps seem to surround his person. Benevolence never darted a ray of light through his benighted soul. Music never charmed his ear. "The motion of his spirits are as dull as night, and his affections are as dark as Erebus"—Intoxicated joys, and festive riot, are as opposed to our institution, as they are to innocence. But gladness of heart we cultivate as a virtue, and esteem a habit of cheerfulness as a happy and almost a necessary regimen of the mind. Nature is full of her bounties, shall we not rejoice? Shall we re-

use to catch from the works of God their smiling harmony? Shall we love and not be charmed? All nature has its gambols, shall man alone be without his gaiety? Shew us a morose man, that deserves to be loved for his goodness of heart, and we will shew you a miracle.

AGAIN listen! She comes, and there is music in the air, and the zephyrs breath love. Fair descendant of Eve, your enquiries are anticipated. Unbend that frowning brow, it ill becomes you. Remember that originally, masons were a society of artists, with whose secrets and toils women had as little to do, as men have with female mysteries. Think not that there is any thing dissolute or immoral in our rights. They would afford you nothing, that should give to the bosom of innocence a sigh, or to the cheek of modesty a blush. Consider the delicate plant of female reputation, that there is a canker worm, that hungers for its foliage. Permit me to suggest, that a secret society, in which the initiated only of both sexes were admitted, though your innocence and virtue entitled you to the name of Diana's votaries, might yet, in this very uncandid world, afford a too delicious banquet for the tongue of slander. Man, exposed and hardened in the storms of life, becomes insensible to the relations in which providence has placed him; but woman, more secure,

and naturally more sympathetic and religious, needs not the aid of adventitious associations, to render her benevolence expansive, or her piety warm. Ours are the toils, and yours the benefits. Do you find in masons less affectionate parents, less kind brothers, or less tender husbands? Are we less your admirers, less honorable companions, or less generous protectors? No, my fair sisters; and could our wishes be realized, we would give you in each, if possible, a double blessing. Brethren! Remember, that female protection is sacred to the honor of a mason;

“And when to you she flies from fear’s alarms,

“Refuse her not the TEMPLE of your ARMS.”

WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER, WARDENS, AND
BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE OF NEW-
HAMPSHIRE!

SUFFER me in the name of the Blazing-Star Lodge, to greet you with the salutation of joy, of praise, of acknowledgment. May your assiduity and devotedness to the institution meet with the only reward your benevolence and virtue asks, the pleasure of seeing their good deeds multiplied. We rejoice, that while private associations for the destruction of government and religion have brought sideway imputations on masonry, we need only point to the Grand Lodge of New-Hampshire, to refute so unjust an aspersión. Our order

has been tolerated in all governments, because its tenets and its practice have ever made it a support to the government under which it has been protected. No cabal in church or state has ever been fomented by masonry. In whatever country it has been an inhabitant, never has it misplaced a single stone in the temples of their religion, or weakened a single pillar in the sheltering edifice of government. If we have duties as citizens, those duties are doubly binding upon us as masons; and although we cannot be responsible for the wicked effects of other secret societies, yet as masons we can and do pledge ourselves to support the government under which we live, and to strengthen its wise and much envied administration with every energy of our characters.

BRETHREN OF THE BLAZING-STAR LODGE!

YOU are congratulated on the opening prospects of this day. You are set as watchmen over a deposit valuable and sacred. Presume not to diminish or encrease the principles, which has preserved to you from the earliest dawn of time, the society in which we mingle in fellowship this day. No secret institution can justify itself to the public on any other principles, than those of masonry. The disregard of these, or the creeping in of new maxims, like the serpent in the garden of Eden, would beguile your innocence and render you

unworthy the sweet abodes of your peace. In all your admissions have respect to the moral, social, and religious character of man ; remembering that he, who is deficient in his duties to himself, will not probably fulfil his other duties ; that he, who is without fellow feeling, can be no ornament to an institution founded in benevolence ; and that he, who is without piety, is not the half of a man. Under a strict adherence to our ancient *land marks*, may the consummation of our wishes be speedily realized, when all mankind shall exhibit themselves fellow labourers in the craft of love, and members of one Grand Lodge of Brotherhood, the canopy of heaven its arch and the earth its base ; and when we take the degree of eternity, may there be opened to us the door of that Lodge, made without hands and which is eternal in the heavens.

10-00-67

